AMENDMENT

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended) A method for processing mail items, comprising the steps of:

separating said mail items into an envelope batch and a contents batch;

applying a first set of labels to said envelope batch, said first set of labels further comprising a first sequential series of alpha-numeric characters;

applying a second set of labels to said contents batch, said second set of labels further comprising said first sequential series of alpha-numeric characters;

scanning envelopes in said envelope batch and generating a first list of alpha-numeric characters ~~read from said first set of labels, and images of the envelopes~~ and envelope images in said envelope batch; wherein said list of alpha-numeric characters is read from said first set of labels;

scanning contents pages in said contents batch and generating a second list of alpha-numeric characters ~~read from said second set of labels, and images of the contents pages~~ and contents pages images in said contents batch; wherein said list of alpha-numeric characters is read from said second set of labels; and

merging said envelope images with said contents pages images having common alpha-numeric characters so as to create a combined mail item image for each said mail item.

2. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

prior to said step of merging said envelope images with said contents pages images, comparing said first and second lists of alpha-numeric characters to identify individual alpha-numeric characters present in only one of said envelope batch and said contents batch.

3. (original) The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of:

after said comparing step, generating a database report indicating any occurrences of alpha-numeric characters being present in only one of said envelope batch and said contents batch.

4. (original) The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of:

after said comparing step, displaying only said envelope images and said contents pages images that include an image of said labels.

5. (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 4~~ claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

prior to said step of applying a second set of labels to said contents batch, inserting a blank page in at least one of said contents batches, said step of applying a second set of labels to said contents batch further comprising applying a label from said second set of labels to said blank page.

6. (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 5~~ claim 4, further comprising the steps of:

prior to said step of displaying said envelope images and said contents pages images, sorting said images based upon image file size and selecting for display those images of a file size generally equal to an image of said blank page bearing only a label.

7. (original) The method of claim 1, said first set of labels further comprising at least one alpha-numeric character identifying said first set of labels as envelope batch labels, and said second set of labels further comprising at least one alpha-numeric character identifying said second set of labels as contents batch labels.

8. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

prior to said separating step, sorting said mail items into groups having common envelope sizes.

9. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of printing said first and second sets of labels interspersed with one another in order of their alpha-numeric characters.

10. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said steps of applying said first and second sets of labels further comprise sequentially applying one of said labels from said first set of labels having an alpha-numeric designation, followed by applying one of said labels from said second [[said]] set of labels having the same alpha-numeric designation, and continuing said sequential application of said labels for all envelopes in said envelop batch and all contents pages in said contents batch.

11. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
transmitting to an intended recipient of said mail ~~article~~ items said combined mail item image.

12. (original) A system for processing mail items, comprising:
a scanner; and
a control program operative on a microprocessor in electrical communication with said scanner, said control program being operative to print a first set of labels comprising a first sequential series of alpha-numeric characters and a second set of labels comprising said first sequential series of alpha-numeric characters, said control program being further operative to:

receive a first list of alpha-numeric characters read from said first sequential series of alpha-numeric characters and images of envelopes associated with said first sequential series of alpha-numeric characters;

receive a second list of alpha-numeric characters read from said second sequential series of alpha-numeric characters and images of contents pages associated with said second sequential series of alpha-numeric characters; and

merge said envelope images with said contents pages images having common alpha-numeric characters so as to create a combined mail item image for each said mail item.

13. (original) The system of claim 12, said control program being further operative to compare said first and second lists of alpha-numeric characters to identify individual alpha-numeric characters present in only one of said first and second lists.

14. (original) The system of claim 13, said control program being further operative to generate a database report indicating any occurrences of alpha-numeric characters being present in only one of said first and second lists.

15. (original) The system of claim 13, said control program being further operative to display only said envelope images and said contents pages images that include an image of one of said alpha-numeric characters.

16. (currently amended) The system of claim 12, said control program being further operative to transmit to an intended recipient of said mail article-items said combined mail item image.